TWO SERMONS

Concerning

Nature and Grace.

Preach'd at

WHITE-HALL,

APRIL, 1699.

BY

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TO THE

Honourable Auditory

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WHITE-HALL,

At whoſe Requeſt theſe

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Are Publiſhed,

The AUTHOR

Dedicates them with all Reſpect,

And his humble WISHES for their Eternal Welfare.

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SERMON I.

St. MATTH. XXVI. 35.

Peter ſaid unto him, Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.

THE Words beſpeak us to contemplate a Juſt and Dutiful Reſolution; made by a Man that had both as much Conſcience to engage him in what was fit, and as much Courage to execute what he had engaged in, as any other of Mankind muſt ever pretend to. And yet this Reſolution was not kept, it failed very diſgracefully: And my chief Purpoſe at this time is to enquire into the Cauſes, How it came ſo to fail. In order to which, it will lie in my way to premiſe ſomewhat more of the Character of the Perſon.

Peter (we know) was a Man of Precedency, and *Above* the reſt of the Diſciples: And

And he was likewiſe one of ſuch Vertues and Qualifications, as ſeem to have recommended him to that Precedency, more than did the Advantage of his Years. He was a Man of real and tender Goodneſs: And this is ſufficiently evident from that Paſſage at his firſt Admiſſion to our Saviour's Acquaintance (St. *Luke* 5.) when being awakened by the miraculous Draught of Fiſhes, and knowing that the Author muſt neceſſarily be from God, he fell down at his Feet, and broke out into this humble and pious Reflexion, *Depart from me, for I am a ſinful man, O Lord!* The Cenſure indeed expreſſes him a *ſinful* Man; but ſo to cenſure *himſelf*, implies more effectually than any thing elſe could, that he was a Good Man: And though the Words —*Depart from me*— carry in them the Face of Fear, yet he who heard them, and knew the Heart of the Speaker, found that they carried in them a greater meaſure of Deſire; for *Peter* was not willing to be rid of his new Gueſt, but only longing to be made more worthy of his Converſation.

He was a Man of great Love to his Maſter, and of no leſs Zeal for his Religion: Of which, from among many, I ſhall take one

one Inſtance out of St. *John* 6. Where, upon the Deſertion of ſeveral other Diſciples, our Saviour puts the Queſtion to the Twelve, *Will ye alſo go away?* Then (ſays the Text) *Peter anſwered him, Lord whither ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life.* An Anſwer ſo wiſe and faithful, ſo evidencing his confirmed Choice of the Better Part, that God ſeems to have rewarded him for it with the Grace of an immediate Revelation; the Matter whereof follows in the next Words: For thus runs the Text, *Lord whither ſhall we go? Thou haſt the words of eternal life:* And then it follows --- *And we believe, and are ſure that thou art Chriſt, the Son of the living God.* Now if we look into St. *Matth.* 16. 17. we ſee there what our Saviour pronounces concerning this very Confeſſion, (viz.) *Bleſſed art thou, Simon Barjona, for Fleſh and Blood has not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.* That our Saviour *had the words of eternal life*, Peter was able to deduce from the Principles of Natural Reaſon; becauſe Reaſon was able to judge from the Internal Characters of his Doctrine, That it was worthy of God, and accommodated properly to advance Humane Nature

Nature to eternal Happineſs: but for all this, Reaſon could not infallibly determine that the Meſſenger of this Doctrine was therefore the *Meſſias*, the ὁ Χριστὸς the *Son*, that is, *the eternal Son of the living God.* To know this, needed a new Illumination: And this Illumination (I ſay) it ſeems God vouchſafed him at that inſtant, as a Reward of that Faith and Choice which he had then declared.

In a word --- *Peter* was a Man of Sincerity, Firmneſs, and Conſtancy: And for this we need no farther Teſtimony than that of our Saviour, in conferring upon him the Symbolical Name of *Cephas*, i. e. *a Rock.*

Thus much of his Character being premiſed, I may be bold to affirm of this his Reſolution in the Text, That it was as Honeſt a one, that is, both as Juſt in the Matter, and as Sincere in the Intention, as ever was made by any of Mankind, or ever ſhall be made to the End of the World; and yet this Reſolution miſcarried, and ended only in the Shame of the Reſolver: For after that *Peter* had declared ſo ſtoutly --- *Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee* --- yet he faintly and Coward-like deny'd his Lord, without

without any ſuch Tryal as the imminent fear of dying.

Imagine we now what may have been the cauſe of this miſcarriage, and the defeat of ſo good a Reſolution in ſo good a Man. His Character will not ſuffer us to imagine he made it in a braving Diſſimulation: No, himſelf proved himſelf ſufficiently in earneſt, by his ſubſequent behaviour in the Garden; where he drew his Sword againſt a whole Band of Men, and thereby made it appear that he had leſs concern for his own Life, than he had for his Maſter's Safety.

Would we know then how this Reſolution came to be abortive? The Reaſon was purely this ----- *Peter* grounded it upon too much Confidence in Himſelf; he never doubted of himſelf, but that he had power to perform that which he did ſo honeſtly reſolve; and this was the πρῶτον ψεῦδος, the original of all his failure.

He reſolved honeſtly, I ſay; but none may preſume to ſay he reſolved wiſely: For his Lord had juſt admoniſh'd him of his peril of Lapſing, (*v.* 31.) *All ye ſhall be offended becauſe of me this night:* To which

Peter anſwers confidently, *Though all ſhould be offended, yet will not I be offended:* To check this Truſt in himſelf, our Saviour rejoyns ---- That *He* in particular ſhould lapſe in a manner more ſcandalous than all the reſt; *Verily I ſay unto thee, before the Cock crow thou ſhalt deny me thrice:* But *Peter* looking upon this Monition no farther than as it imply'd a Reproach to his Faith, and his Love, and his Courage, he ſummons them up all to form this final Reſolve, *Tho I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.*

But where was his Wiſdome, where was his Reflexion in the mean while? It ſhould have been remembred that he who precaution'd him was *the Searcher of Hearts, and needed not that any ſhould teſtifie of Man, becauſe he knew what was in Man.* And therefore in Wiſdome *Peter* ought rather to have diſtruſted his own Heart, than the Judgment of his Lord, when he ſuggeſted that his Heart was deceiving. It ought to have been remembred that his Lord had ſaid before---- *Without me ye can do nothing*; and therefore *Peter* in Wiſdome ſhould not have preſumed Ability in himſelf; but inſtead of this have

have implored Ability from him, whence all humane ſufficiency is derived------*Lord, leave not me! that I may not leave thee! Lord, ſtrengthen me by thy Grace that I may not deny thee, and then I ſhall not deny thee.* In this method he had been ſecure, and prevented his ſhamefull fall. But inſtead of this, he builds a Reſolution upon his own Strength; and our Lord, to rebuke him, did no other than leave him to *his own ſtrength to perform it*; and this was in effect the ſame as to leave him under the neceſſity of *not* performing it.

For this is the main Leſſon that this inſtance teaches us, (*viz.*) That Man when he is left unto himſelf, is purely weak and inſufficient to any thing that is good.

Theſe two Points are evident in *Peter*'s Caſe. 1. That he did not rightly know himſelf when he made his Reſolution. And 2. That the Defeat of his Reſolution taught him, that notwithſtanding all his particular Graces and Endowments, he was not able to do any thing as he ſhould do, without God's actual Aſſiſtance. And therefore, for our preſent Inſtruction, I ſhall draw theſe two Obſervations from the Caſe. 1. That

it is Hard to know our ſelves. And, 2. That to know our ſelves Truly, is to know that we are (and that in our beſt Eſtate) weak and inſufficient of our ſelves to do any thing that is good.

1. It is hard to know our ſelves.

By the Knowledge of our ſelves I intend not the Knowledge of our mechanick Frame; to know by what Ligaments our Soul is united to our Body; or by what mediating Correſpondencies they act mutually upon one another; to know in what manner Senſation, or in what Remembrance is performed; what Springs ſet our involuntary Motions a-work; or what Influence our Will communicates to thoſe that are voluntary: To know this is not ſimply Hard, but impoſſible; and it ought to mortifie the Pride of any Man's Underſtanding, to conſider, That the ſmalleſt of the Parts we are compoſed of, and the leaſt of thoſe Acts we are always converſant with, which we ſee minutely, and live by their being done, do yet eſcape and ſurmount our Comprehenſion.

But if the Knowledge of this part of our ſelves be impoſſible, one thing we may infer from the benignity of Providence, That likewiſe

wiſe it is not Needful. It would not conduce any thing to the Happineſs of Mankind, to be better acquainted with the Philoſophy of our Beings: nor do we ſuffer any thing from the Ignorance of it. The Soul acts as orderly in thoſe that never Enquire, as in thoſe that pretend to determine the chief place of its Reſidence: and our Pulſe beats as well when we think not of it at all, as when we think of it never ſo wiſely.

But the Knowledge here intended is the Knowledge of our *Moral* Selves; of our ſtate in reſpect of Vertue; whether we really chuſe to follow that which is Good, and what Firmneſs there is in our Choice; whether we make Proficiency in Religion, and whether there be Sincerity in our Pretences; what is the ſtate of our Wills, Inclinations, and Deſires; all which the Prophet *Jeremy* means by the word *Heart*, when he thus pronounces concerning it, *The Heart is deceitful above all things, and deſperately wicked, who can know it?* Who can know it? Not a ſecond; not any one *without* us; this we are ſure of. But this is not all: We *our ſelves* can hardly know that Heart which we carry in our *own* Breaſts: Its Propenſions are

retired

retired and dark; and it is not eaſie to gueſs whether the Bent of our Affections will carry us at any time, when their reſpective occaſions offer. Now to be ignorant of our ſelves in this reſpect, can never be of an indifferent importance. If we know not our ſelves, be ſure we ſhall neither diſapprove our ſelves, nor mend our ſelves; nor will natural Pride fail to take hold of the occaſion; that is, To make the beſt Interpretation of that which we leaſt diſcern: And ſo the more Ignorant we are of our ſelves, the more we ſhall come to be Opiniative and Conceited.

What falſe meaſures Men may take of themſelves, we are advertis'd in a remarkable Inſtance, *Rev.* 3. where our Lord ſpeaks of the *Laodiceans* in theſe words, *ver.* 17. *Thou ſay'ſt I am rich, and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing; and knoweſt not that thou art wretched and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked.* Now was not this a Judgment of themſelves wonderfully erroneous? Wou'd one think it poſſible that any Man ſhould not be able to diſcern between Riches and Poverty, Sight and Blindneſs, being Cloath'd and being Naked? We may juſtly think

think it impoſſible in the Literal Senſe; but how is it then in the Moral? Is it poſſible for a vicious Man to think himſelf Godly? Is it poſſible for the Churl to account himſelf Liberal? for the Senſual to account himſelf Heavenly-minded? for the Negligent to account himſelf Devout? Is not this equally hard? And yet the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſuggeſts, *Chap.* 32. 4. that *when the Eyes of them that ſee are dim, the Churl may account himſelf liberal*; and ſo in the reſt: That is, When once indulged Affections have impoſed upon the Underſtanding, and darkned the Soul, and Men are thereupon content to take up with falſe Notions, and to judge of themſelves by falſe Rules, they *may come to* eſteem themſelves Good, though they *are* abſolutely Evil: They may think well of themſelves for ſome caſual Acts of Vertue, though in the mean time they live under the Habit of contrary Vices; They may account themſelves Religious even while they are Carnal, Worldly, and Immoral: And yet to *be* Religious, and at the ſame time to be Immoral, implies as great a Contradiction as is to be found between Riches and Poverty, Sight and Blindneſs.

But

But this indeed is a Deceit ſo groſs, that it cannot paſs upon an honeſt and conſiderate Mind: And therefore I ſhall produce ſome others, that are more refin'd and ſubtle, and ſuch as may eſcape the Obſervation of a more ſcrupulous Enquiry into our ſelves. For example.

1. Even when we do well, it is hard to diſcern from what Principles we act; whether from the Fear and Love of God, which certainly ſanctifie; or from external Conſiderations, which ſanctifie not at all, but yet may occaſionally produce Actions of the ſame appearing Goodneſs.

When our Saviour entertained thoſe that came to hear him with the multiply'd Loaves, and fed their Bodies as well as their Souls (St. *John* 6.) what a hearty Confeſſion did they break forth into, *ver.* 14. *This is of a truth that Prophet that ſhould come into the World.* How ſedulouſly did they follow him? What pains did they take to be with him? How did they repine at the miſſing his Converſation but a part of a day? Cou'd any one believe but that theſe were Diſciples mature and ſteady? and prepared to confeſs their Maſter at the peril of their Lives? I queſtion

queſtion not but they believed as much of themſelves; and look'd upon themſelves as influenc'd altogether with the Spirit of Religion: And yet no ſooner did our Saviour give them one juſt and gentle Rebuke, reproaching them for being more affected with his Loaves than with his Doctrine; and inſtructing them that God's Truth ought not to be follow'd mercenarily; But he diſcover'd their Feeble, their Cheat, till then unknown even to themſelves, and made them diſcover it to all the World; for 'tis ſaid (ver. 66.) *They took offence at it, and went back, and walk'd no more with him.* And thus it always falls out, when Vertue happens to be attended with Temporal Advantages, as Reputation, Favour, Fortunes, and the like; we can hardly tell, without farther Experiment of our ſelves, whether we regard Vertue for it ſelf, or only for its Advantages; or whether it be Piety, or ſimple Appetite, that ſets us a-work.

2. It is hard to diſcern between a Religious State and a Religious Humour; a Religious State, that is founded ſteadily upon the Grace of God, and a Religious Humour, that ſprings up haſtily from the concurrence

of outward Accidents, and is as desultory and mutable as the Cause from which it springs.

How often does it happen, that Men upon the Success of Affairs, and Ease of Circumstances, find their Hearts fill'd with Expressions of Thankfulness to God, and Charity to all the World; and yet upon the change of Circumstances they immediately sowr both towards God and Man? Now if such Men shall estimate themselves during the Religious Mood, how is it possible but that they should be deceived in the Opinion of their own state? There is but one way possible to prevent their being deceived, and that is the bringing themselves under the Probation of the voluntary Cross, to the Offices of Mortification and Self-denial: But then how hard is it moreover to persuade Men that they are obliged to this officious Probation?

3. It is hard to free our Judgment from those Prejudices and extreme Mutations which it is subject to receive from the different Crasis and State of our Animal Spirits. Thus sometimes, when the Body is vigorous and gay, it shuts out that measure of Fear which is necessary to make us wise; and it suffers

ſuffers us not to ſee that Sin we are guilty of, and that lies at our door: And on the other hand, When the Spirits are dejected and low, they often let in ſuch an Exceſs of Fear as *betrays the Succours of Reaſon*, and makes Men cruciate themſelves with the Apprehenſions of Sin, ev'n where there is really none. And hence we have ſometimes ſeen it come to paſs, That a Cordial Medicine has quieted a Mind, and ſet a grieved Conſcience at rights: Which Effect could not poſſibly proceed from That Cauſe, but upon the preſent Suppoſition, (*viz.*) That our Judgments are apt to be impos'd upon and miſled by the various Influences of our Body.

4. To judge of our ſelves without Proof and Tryal, is the ſure way to be deceived; and yet it is hard to diſcern what is the right Method of Proving our ſelves, and what is our proper Tryal.

What a fair Progreſs had that Man in the Goſpel made towards the Kingdom of God, who told our Saviour, *That he had kept all the Commandments from his Youth?* Nor did he tell it in Hypocriſie; for it is ſaid, that *our Saviour lov'd him*; which could not have

been but for the Truth of what he told: and yet this Man could not bring himſelf over the Difficulty of parting with his Eſtate, and becoming a Diſciple, though he were promiſed the Recompenſe of *Treaſure in Heaven*. How many have born up commendably under all the Preſſures of Afflictions, and at laſt ſunk in a Calm, and given themſelves up vanquiſh'd to the Enticements of Proſperity? Men of Courage, but not of Caution! And how many, on the other hand, have liv'd commendably in good Fortunes, and at laſt quitted their Vertue leſt their Fortunes ſhould be worſted? Men of Caution, but not of Courage. Thus, I ſay, No man can make a haſty Conjecture at what is his Proper Tryal. But,

5. When we *have prov'd* our ſelves, and ſo may *know* our ſelves; yet ſtill it is hard to *own* our ſelves for *ſuch* as we have prov'd our ſelves to be.

For when we have prov'd our ſelves to the bottom, as we may do by the Doctrine of the Scripture, and our own Experience, we ſhall find our ſelves to be mere Weakneſs and Emptineſs, and without Power in our *Selves* to do any thing well. Now though this

this be a Truth, than which the Word of God delivers none more plainly, nor can our own Experience atteſt any one more convincingly; yet there lurks in us a natural Pride, which makes us perfectly averſe from Believing it. We love to imagine our ſelves Great; inſomuch that we hate to know our ſelves *otherwiſe*; and had rather ſuſpect and find fault with the Glaſs that repreſents us under a diminiſhing form.

And this was properly *Peter*'s Caſe: He had been told with the reſt, by his Maſter, That *without him he could do nothing*: But this was a Leſſon he had no Stomach to retain. He would not doubt but that his Will was in his own Power, and that his Executing Faculties were under the Power of his Will; ſo that what he had Courage to Reſolve, he had likewiſe Ability to Perform: And this fond Opinion expos'd him to that ſhameful Denyal which follow'd upon it.

After I have aſſerted that it is *Hard* to know our ſelves, I am far from countenancing the ἀκαταληψίαν, the belief that we *cannot* know our ſelves: This is a Notion fruitful of Miſchiefs: It is a Notion that hinders both Proficiency and Amendment; that is con-

contrary both to Faith, and Hope, and Conſolation, without which Religion can have neither Fruit nor Root.

Know our ſelves we *Muſt*; God requires it; and therefore beſure know our ſelves we *May*: Nay, the Truth is, we may eaſily know our ſelves, if we take the right Method to do it. For the common Obſtacle of Self-Knowledge is this; That when we go to examine and look into our ſelves, we look through the wrong End of the Glaſs: We ſeek for Greatneſs and Excellencies wherewithal to *pleaſe* our ſelves; and from this Proſpect we are ſure to reap nothing but Deceit: But let us turn the Glaſs, and look patiently upon our Littleneſs and Defects, whereby to *humble* our ſelves, and this Proſpect will certainly make us wiſe: For Humility is the True Knowledge of our ſelves; and he that knows himſelf to be nothing-worth, knows himſelf well. Which brings me upon my ſecond Propoſition; (*viz.*)

That to know our ſelves Truly, is to know that we are (and that in our beſt Eſtate) abſolutely weak and inſufficient towards Good.

Good-

Goodneſs is a Leſſon which ſimple Nature gives us not Capacity to learn. For ſince the ſtream of our Affections naturally runs to Ill, ſay who it is that can *Turn* that Stream. *Quis poteſt facere mundum de immundo*, ſays Holy Job, *Who can make himſelf clean ſince he is born unclean?* If our *Nature* be ſinful, though it muſt be changed, yet *we* cannot change our Nature: He that makes us better, muſt be a ſuperiour and better Agent than our ſelves.

'Tis true, that though we are born Ignorant, we can make our ſelves Skilful; we can acquire Arts and Sciences by our own Diligence and Study: But the Caſe is not the ſame in reſpect of Goodneſs. We can acquire Arts and Sciences, becauſe we lie under no Connate Indiſpoſition to that Acquirement; for Nature, though it be corrupt, yet ſtill it is curious and buſie after Knowledge; but to Goodneſs we have naturally an Indiſpoſition that is Invincible: Luſts within and Temptations without ſet up ſuch a firm Confederacy againſt it, as we are never able to ſurmount in our own Strength. And therefore it is evident, that in order to ſave Mankind, the Holy Spirit vouchſafed to engage

gage in the Work of Sanctification, as well as the Eternal Son did in that of Redemption, from the Beginning of the World.

When we do well, it is the Aſſiſtance of God that impowers us to concur in the Act; He removes the Hinderances; He reſtrains our oppoſing Luſts; He moves our Will, and draws us to it: And though becauſe of the ſubſequent Concurrence, the *Act* is graciouſly imputed Ours, that ſo we may be intitled to the Reward; yet ſtill the *Power* is God's. Hereupon it is that the Apoſtle arguing againſt that miſchief that neceſſarily follows upon Humane Confidence, thus expreſſes himſelf, 1 *Cor.* 10. 12. Ὁ δοκῶν ἑστάναι, &c. *Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth take heed leſt he fall.* Upon which Text a Critick of Name has given his Opinion, That the Participle δοκῶν is Redundant, and has no peculiar Signification, becauſe the Senſe of the Place is no more than this, *Let him that ſtandeth take heed leaſt he fall.* But it ſeems to me rather that this Criticiſm is Redundant, and that δοκῶν has not only a Signification there, but the moſt Emphatical one that can be imagined: For take notice, That he that thinketh he ſtandeth *in Goodneſs*, does but

think

think ſo: For no Man *ſtands* in Goodneſs; he is only upheld and ſupported *there*, and graciouſly kept upright: Wherefore he that *thinketh* he *ſtands*, is for that very Reaſon more obnoxious to fall. And that the Apoſtle means no leſs in that place, let him be his own Interpreter, *Rom.* 11. 20. where he expreſſes the Manner how even the beſt of Men do ſtand (*viz.*) *Thou ſtandeſt by Faith.* Now he that ſtands by Faith ſtands not by Himſelf; becauſe Faith is properly a Recumbency or Reſt upon *another*. But to make the matter clearer, the Apoſtle illuſtrates it by a Reſemblance (*ver.* 17.) wherein he inſtructs us, That a Good Man *ſtands*, as *the Branch of a wild Olive does*, when it is *grafted into the Good* Olive Tree; and that is, not in its *own* Vertue, but in Vertue of the *Root*; and *ſuch* a Root as is naturally *not its own*. It is Remarkable that the Apoſtle, in that Paſſage, calls a Bad Man a *Wild Olive Tree*: a Wild Olive *Tree*; not barely a *Branch*, but a *Tree*; which having a Root of its own, ſupports it *ſelf*, and ſtands in its own Strength, and brings forth its own Fruit; And ſo does Man in reſpect of the wild and ſour Fruit of an ill Converſation:

He is a *Tree*; has a Root of his own, and Sap and Vegetation, and Seminal Fruitfulneſs, and Power to bring it forth: But in reſpect of Good, he is only a Branch; and all his Fruitfulneſs, and all his Support, depend upon the Influence and Communications of God. You may ſee both the Doctrine and the Illuſtration of it, yet more fully expreſt by our Saviour in the beginning of the 15*th Chapter* of St. *John*.

We may therefore look upon *Sampſon* as a Common Emblem of the Diſpenſations of Grace; and all Men are fortify'd in their *Soul* after the ſame manner that he was in his Body. (For Example:) His Strength lay not in his Sinews, but was extrinſical, in his Locks; though thence communicated to his Sinews: And ſo our Moral Strength lies not in our Soul; for let Reaſon and Conſcience be never ſo well awaken'd, and our Will never ſo well inclin'd, and Practice and Cuſtom contribute all they can; yet ſtill our Soul has no ſtock of Strength intrinſick to it ſelf, by which it can ſuſtain it ſelf. Let the Supplies of Grace be once cut off, as it happen'd to *Sampſon*'s Locks, and (that moment) the Beſt *become weak as other Men*.

Phi-

Philoſophy deceives us in reſpect of Religious Habits: There is no Habit of that kind *difficultly movable from the Subject*, by reaſon of any Strength that Practice introduceth into the Subject *it ſelf*: Our Facility of Acting *Religiouſly*, is both *acquired* and *maintained* by the Grace of God; and that Grace being once ſuſpended, the Habit ſinks in an inſtant. *Hezekiah* was an excellent Man; ſcarce is ſo much ſaid of the Piety of any Man in Sacred Writ, as of *his*; and yet upon a ſudden, in a Tranſaction with the Embaſſadors of *Babylon*, he behav'd himſelf both vainly and profanely; inſomuch that (the Text ſays) *Wrath came upon him for it*; and by that Wrath he was ſenſible of his Fault, and thereby brought back again to his former Integrity. Now to let us underſtand how ſuch a diſagreeing Failure came to find place in the courſe of ſuch an excellent Life, the Holy Pen-man has taken care to tell us expreſly (2 *Chron.* 32. 31.) that *in that matter of the Embaſſadors, God left Hezekiah to himſelf; to try him, and to prove what was in his heart*; that is, To ſhew him to himſelf. ----- The very ſame was *Peter*'s Caſe; How Pious was he in the Houſe? How Cou-

ragious in the Garden? And yet in the Hall both a Coward and a Traditor? Now the Reaſon of all was --- Becauſe his Maſter had, for that Interval, left him *to himſelf*: For the Text ſays, that *When the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter*, that is, look'd upon him with an Operative Compaſſion, *Peter* recovered his Strength; and exerted it in an immediate Repentance, and held it perſeveringly to a glorious end. ---- *Lord, what is Man? what is he without thee?* The Lord has told us plain enough in theſe Inſtances, What he is; *Ev'n a thing of nought.*

Let us imagine a Man to be Swimming, and becauſe he could not Swim without it, to be ſupported by the Chin; To make ſuch a Man ſink, there needs no dipping him, no laying Weights upon him, no hampering or entangling his Limbs; withdraw but the Hand, and he neceſſarily ſinks *of himſelf*. And in like manner, To make the Beſt Man fall, there needs no doing him any Wrong; no wounding his Faculties, no maiming his Judgment, no perverting his Will, no inflaming his Appetites, no heightning his Temptations: Let God barely withdraw his Supplies, and leave him *to himſelf*; that is,

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Permit him to the Power of his Natural Affections (which Affections Grace only covers and reſtrains, it never extinguiſhes during the courſe of this Life:) I ſay, Let a Man in the firmeſt ſtate of Vertue be barely permitted by God to the Power of his Natural Affections, he neceſſarily ſinks into the Level of Common Impotence without any other Influx.

This View of the State of Lapſed Nature I have drawn chiefly from the Doctrine of the Goſpel. Not that I ſuppoſe the Notice of it to be confined to that part of the Scripture: For as it is a Truth that was always of Importance to be known, ſo we have little reaſon to believe but that it *was* known by the Church of God in all Ages from the Beginning.

In the Books of the Prophets, Nature's Inſufficiency to Good, as likewiſe the Free Overtures of Grace to help it out, are plainly teſtify'd. And yet more plainly in the *Pſalmiſt*; where all the Offices of the Holy Spirit conducing to Sanctification (as *Cleanſing*, *Guiding*, *Helping*, *Renewing*, *Comforting*, *Strengthening*, *Eſtabliſhing*) are mentioned as expreſly as in the Goſpel. Iſa. 26. 12. Iſa. 55. 1. *&c.*

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In the Writings of *Moſes*, the Neceſſity of God's Aſſiſtance to Sanctification is delivered with formal Evidence: For after that God had inſtituted Circumciſion as a Symbol of Purity, and had told the *Iſraelites* withal, That the true Diſcharge of their Duty towards him conſiſted in the Moral Circumciſion of the Heart; *i. e.* In taking off their Love from the World, and placing it in the higheſt meaſure upon God; leſt they ſhould fail of their End, through Ignorance of their Means, and ſet about this great Work in Confidence of their own Ability, he *thus* inſtructs them, *Deut.* 30. 6. *The Lord thy God will circumciſe thy heart, and the heart of thy ſeed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy ſoul.* Now what plainer words can be uſed to expreſs, That although they ſtood obliged to love God with all their heart, yet of Themſelves they were not able to work out this Iſſue; but that God was always ready to aſſiſt them to do it.

The *Striving* of God's Holy Spirit with
Gen. 6. 3. Men for their Converſion, is ſpoken of as a known and received Truth before the Flood. And whereas it is ſaid of ſeveral of the Patriarchs,

triarchs, That *they walked with God*; the Expreſſion *with God* muſt reaſonably be interpreted to ſignifie *With God's Aſſiſtance*, as well as *According to his Will.* Gen. 5. 22. Gen. 6. 9.

Farther than this —— Had I leiſure to gratifie the Curious, I have large room to make it appear, That this very Doctrine was familiarly eſpouſed by the Wiſe Men among the Heathen. Who, as they found by Conſcious Experience That it was as little in a Man's Power to make himſelf Vertuous, as it was to make himſelf Fortunate; and as they likewiſe thought it ſuitable to the Goodneſs of God to take Care of Man's Greater Good as well as of his Leſſer, ſo they eſpouſed this Belief of God's aſſiſting Men to Probity of Manners, as a Truth deducible from the firſt Principles of Reaſon. Accordingly *Plato* delivers it as a Rule received from *Socrates*, and laid down as a Fundamental in his Morality, That *Vertue was*, θεία μοῖρα, *a Divine Diſtribution*; and that Education, Precepts, Example, and Practical Diligence, were only partial Advances towards it; but that the State was got and finiſhed by the Concurrence of God. And what can be more expreſs, and withal more venerable,

venerable, than that of *Seneca*, when he ſays, Nulla ſine Deo mens bona, *No Soul can be Good without the Divine Aſſiſtance.*

But I have aſſerted my Point from a better Authority; and therefore thought it fit to engage no farther in this way of Proof, as being ſuperfluous in a Chriſtian Auditory.

Having then offered This as the True Proſpect of the State of Lapſed Nature; the next thing I purpoſe is a Vindication of this State from ſuch Cavils as the Raſh, and ſuch Complaints as the Weak, are apt to conceive againſt it. And this I intend for the Subject of the following Diſcourſe.

SERMON

SERMON II.

St. MATTH. XXVI. 35.

Peter ſaid unto him, Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.

IN a former Diſcourſe upon this Text, I offer'd the Scriptural View and Account of Lapſed Nature; from whence it fully appears, that no Man is ſufficient either to be or to continue Good *in his own Strength.*

Which is a Doctrine directly ſerving the Two great Ends of Religion: *viz.* To exalt the Glory of God; And to beat down all Pretences of Humane Pride.

But as all Truth is abuſable, ſo we may be aware that many eſpouſe this very Truth the more freely, only that they may the more freely form it into an Apology for careleſs Living. For Example, thus they argue: 'Our Nature is indiſpoſed, perverſe, and

'insufficient to Good; therefore, How miserable is our Condition, thus to be maimed before we were born, and made guilty before we knew how to act, and obnoxious for doing that which we cannot help? How unaccountably fatal was the Indiscretion of our First Parents, which gave occasion to this Disorder? And how unfortunate their Posterity, to whom it is derived? Why did not God, with more appearance of Compassion, redintegrate our Nature after the Fall, and restore it to its Primitive Uprightness? How much better had his Service been provided for by this Method, and Man more happily prevented from his Displeasure? Which Displeasure of his we cannot now avoid, unless it be by his own Act; whose Actings are not supposable to be at our Discretion. Now it is certain that all such kind of Arguings are profane, and tend to nothing but the Dishonour of God, and the Support and Countenance of Vice in the World: And therefore to obviate these Mischiefs, and to carry on my Contemplation to its proper Usefulness, I am obliged to enquire into the Reasons ---- *Why the Wisdom and Goodness of God thought fit to leave*

leave Mankind under this preſent ſtate of Weakneſs and Inſufficiency. From which Enquiry I ſhall ſhow, 1. That *what God Chiefly intended thereby* was, *To oblige us more ſtrictly to live in a perpetual Dependance upon himſelf*; And 2. *That ſuch a Dependance (put in Practice) will effectually cut off all poſſible pretences of humane Complaint.*

My firſt Buſineſs is, to enquire into the Reaſons why the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God thought fit to leave Mankind under this preſent ſtate of Weakneſs, Inſufficiency, and Diſorder.

We muſt allow, That God could have immediately reformed that Diſorder, which was brought upon our Nature by the Firſt Diſobedience; He could have check'd it in its firſt Authors, and not ſuffer'd it to be propagated to their Poſterity; but in the mean time it would be much too bold, for any one to ſay that this would have been the Better Method: For 'tis certain, That in things proceeding from God, that which *Is*, is always Beſt; though we ſometimes cannot penetrate into the Reaſons that make it ſo. But as to the preſent Inſtance, we may (with Reverence) penetrate into its Rea-

ſons, and ſuch as muſt be allow'd of. *Ex. gr.*

1. Who can think but that when Sin had got footing in deſpight of God's Command, it was fit he ſhould leave ſome Teſtimony of his Diſpleaſure againſt it? Now let me ſay at preſent what I will prove afterwards, (*viz.*) That all the Weakneſs and Diſorder that remains upon our Nature (if its Miſchief be not farther extended by voluntary and choſen Malice) amounts to no more than ſuch a Teſtimony of God's Diſpleaſure againſt Sin.

There are ſome who believe, That all the Waſt and Craggineſs, and other ſeeming Deformities which appear upon the Face of the Earthly Globe, were occaſioned by the violent Concuſſions that happened at *Noah*'s Flood. Now ſhould ſuch be ask'd a Reaſon why God did not reſtore his Work to its original Beauty, they would think it ſufficient to ſay, 'Twas fit it ſhould ſtand ſo Monumentally, to deter future Ages from the like Provocations: And give me leave to ſay, It was fit that That Diſorder which Sin in its firſt Beginnings brought upon our Nature ſhould be left there, as a Monument of Caution

tion againſt that Sin which occaſioned it; and which, if farther comply'd with, will bring on Diſorders much more deplorable than any we now feel.

Indeed it may be objected, that there is a great Diſparity between theſe two Iſſues, Diſorder left upon the Face of the Earth, and Diſorder left upon the Frame of Man: For the Earth feels no Miſery from the Deformity of its Surface; and when a Man looks upon the moſt craggy, ſquallid, or barren Parts of it, and reflects withal, that it is a Monument of God's Diſpleaſure, he may receive a wholſome Inſtruction *againſt* Sin, but no Temptation *to* Sin from ſuch a Proſpect: Whereas the Diſorder left upon *us*, is that whereby we *ſuffer*; It is the Fountain of our Miſery, and our continual Temptation; and ſo runs us upon that Diſpleaſure whereof it gives us Warning; and therefore we *juſtly* complain of its Continuance.

This may be an Objection, and I confeſs it were of weight, had God left Man helpleſs under the Influence of this Diſorder; and if, as we have propenſions to Sin, ſo we laid under a Neceſſity of following thoſe propenſions: But when it is conſidered, that at the ſame

ſame time God has covenanted for Grace to be our Remedy; and that he himſelf will give unto us whatſoever we want in our ſelves; the Objection (as popular as it is) appears to be fallacious; and (more than that) a Calumny againſt the Goodneſs of God.

For what Reaſon have we to complain of Natural Blindneſs, if *God* vouchſafes to be our Eyes and our Sight? Of Natural Impotence, if *He* will be our Defence and Support? Of Captivity to Luſts and Paſſions, if *He* be our Redeemer, and will ſet us free? Now God is faithful, who has promiſed to be All This unto us: and therefore if we complain, the Reproach of our Complaint muſt return upon our ſelves; and accordingly we ſhall find that They complain moſt of the Corruption of Nature, who would rather enjoy its Corruption, than uſe the appointed means to have it reformed.

2. The Goodneſs of God and his tender Care of humane Welfare, is more abundantly manifeſted in this our preſent ſtate of Weakneſs and Infirmity.

God made the firſt Man Upright; that is, in a ſtate wherein he could be good in virtue of

of his own Abilities: which is the great difference from ours, that we pretend to repine at. But if God at this time, though he do not make Man upright, yet vouchſafes to nurſe, guide, and train him to ſuch a ſtate of Uprightneſs as himſelf will be pleaſed withal; Who can ſay but the *Iſſue* is the ſame to Man? but moreover, the Care and Attendance upon him is infinitely greater.

If a Lord give his Servant an entire Eſtate, he diſcovers a kind and liberal Mind in ſo doing; but if (inſtead of this) he ſhall make daily Viſits to him, and from time to time provide him with what is fit; none can doubt but that in this Method he diſcovers a more conſtant and unwearied Love? It was a remarkable Proof of God's Favour to the *Iſraelites*, when by his Donation and Conduct he brought them to poſſeſs the Land of *Canaan*; but for all this, we muſt acknowledge that his Favour to them was more conſpicuous to the Obſervation both of themſelves and others, while he daily took care of their Meat and Drink, and indeficiency of their Cloathing in the naked and barren Wilderneſs. And this is an exact Emblem of our preſent Caſe. How daily, how minutely,

nutely, how inceſſant, is the Vigilance and Proviſion of God for Man in this ſtate of Infirmity? Were any thing Laborious to Omnipotence, and could there be more and leſs of Pains, where all things are eaſie; I might ſay that God takes more pains to ſave any particular Soul, than he did to make, or does to govern the Univerſal World. He made the World by the Breath of his Command; and ſo he governs it: for it has no power to reſiſt. But where he has placed an Elective Power of Reſiſting, *There* to watch over that Power, to attend every Motion of our Hearts, to check every Evil, and to cheriſh every good one; to encourage it into Act, to reward it with Complacency, to propagate and eſtabliſh it by Supplies of that good Principle which firſt ſet it a-work; to feed, and lead, and drive, and diſcipline his Flock, to retrieve the Wandering, to wait upon the Tender and Weak, and to carry the Impotent upon his Shoulders (as he is pleas'd to ſymbolize his Care of Man under the Compariſon of the good Shepherd;) This is a Series of Care and Attention as well as Love, which the OEconomy of whole Nature beſides does not require.

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This indeed is the moſt amazing Contemplation that can enter into our Thoughts, and which made Holy *Job* break out into thoſe words of Wonder, *Chap.* 7. 14. *Lord what is man that thou ſhould'ſt magnifie him, and that thou ſhould'ſt ſet thy heart upon him? and that thou ſhould'ſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment?* This is the wonderful Goodneſs of God towards Man in his preſent ſtate; and this indeed is the *only* Title that every Man ought to value himſelf upon; ev'n this, That God values him ſo much; but ſtill to be more humble, becauſe he can ſo little deſerve it.

3. A Third Reaſon why the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God thought fit to leave us under this ſtate of Infirmity, is this; (*viz.*) That he might thereby oblige us more ſtrictly to live in a perpetual Dependance upon himſelf. And this is that Reaſon I ſhall chiefly inſiſt on, and proceed to ſhew what is the Nature and what the Fruits of this Dependance upon God.

There is a Dependance upon God which we may call Paſſive, becauſe it relates not to any Act of our Choice or Will; for we muſt depend upon him *whether we will or no.*

We *muſt* depend upon God for our Life, and for every moment of its Continuance. For let us love Life never ſo much, we cannot continue it to any Term or Period beyond God's Pleaſure and Deſignation. I mean not that God has fixt a fatal Period to every Man's Life. The Notion of Fate diminiſhes from the Honour of Providence: But I mean that God, for the very Manifeſtation of his Providence, ſuffers not humane Life to wear out and determine according to the ordinary Laws of Nature; but takes the Meaſures of it into his own arbitrary Diſpoſal, and either extends or ſhortens it as he ſees fit. We may obſerve of all other Creatures, that Nature governs the Meaſures of their Laſting; that (abating Violences) their Period is generally uniform, and they *wear out* their Thread of Life in proportion to that ſtrength of which it is ſpun. But Man ſeldom wears out his Thread, it is for the moſt part ſuddenly *cut off*; and Men die, perhaps in equal numbers every Year, through the whole Interval from the Cradle to mature Old Age.

Again, We depend upon God for all the Event and Succeſs of our Undertakings: And

And this is another Inſtance which God has ſelected to his own Diſpoſal, and exempted from the ordinary Laws of Nature, on purpoſe to give Teſtimony to his Providence in governing the World. For undoubtedly, it is but ſuitable to Nature's Law, That the *Race ſhould be to the Swift, and the Battle to the Strong*; That the beſt Contrivances and Means ſhould have the beſt Succeſs. And yet it often falls out otherwiſe in the Caſe of Man; where the wiſeſt Projects are defeated, and the moſt hopeful means are controul'd; and *Time and Chance happens unto all: Time and Chance, i. e.* At ſundry Times ſundry Events fall out, which they who look no farther than the Events themſelves, call *Chance*, becauſe they fall out quite contrary both to their Intentions and their Hopes; though at the ſame time, in reſpect of God's Providence over-ruling in theſe Events, it were profane to call them Chance, for they are pure Deſignation.

I may add farther, That we depend upon God for all our *Actions:* For ſince our *Life* depends upon God, and Life is our ſole Capacity of Acting, it muſt follow, That in reſpect of this Remote Cauſality All our

Actions depend upon God. Yet I do not ſay that our Actions do *ſo* depend upon God, as that we need his immediate Concurrence to all we do; or that we cannot exert any Motion or Senſation without his actual Aſſiſtance: Becauſe the Allowance of This would be attended with ſeveral abſurd Conſequences. For, 1. Suppoſing our Actions to be *Evil*, the imputing God's Concurrence to *ſuch*, would be a Reflexion upon his Holineſs. And, 2. Suppoſing our Actions to be *Indifferent*; yet, to ſay that God's actual Concurrence is neceſſary to *ſuch*, is no other than a Diſparagement to his Workmanſhip; for it implies an Original Defect in his Creature.

To illuſtrate this matter by the Compoſitions of Art: It is the End and Deſign of a Watch to move, and by that Motion to diſtinguiſh Time: Now ſuppoſe an Artiſt ſhould make a Watch of never ſo curious a Figure, but yet ſuch a one as that its Index would not move unleſs he that made it obliged himſelf to the perpetual Attendance of his Finger; what would our Cenſure be of ſuch a piece of Work?

To Move, to Feel, to Perceive, to Deliberate, Reſolve, and Execute, are Actions for which Man was deſigned; his Nature, Station, and Duty, charge them upon him: Now if we ſuppoſe Man not able to diſcharge thoſe Functions and Offices for which he was deſigned, without the perpetual Attendance of his Maker, how can ſuch a Creature be cleared from the Imputation of an Original Defect?

There is indeed another ſort of Actions in reſpect of which this Objection will not lie. All our Actions, ſo far as they are morally Good, depend ſo immediately upon God, that they require his actual Concurrence to the doing of them: And yet this does not imply an Original Defect in Man, but only a *Fall* from that Original Perfection wherein he was firſt made. And why under this ſtate of Man's Depravation, the Divine Wiſdom choſe rather to aid and ſupport him by a perpetual Attendance, than to redintegrate him to his primitive Strength; is the particular Caſe whereof I am now aſſigning the Reaſons.

I have ſpoken hitherto of our *Paſſive* Dependance upon God, our Dependance of Neceſ-

Neceſſity; which therefore, as ſuch, can carry no Vertue in it: And yet it is the immediate matter of our Active Dependance, ſo that one Turn of our *Will* can change our Neceſſity into Vertue. *Ex. gr.*

We depend upon God *whether we will or no*, whether we think of it or no; But then let us depend upon him *Intentionally*, *Willingly*, and we do That that is properly Religious, and what God will both Accept and Reward.

To induce us thus to husband our Neceſſity, and improve it wiſely into Vertue, let us conſider on this manner ------ We depend upon God for our Life and Being, and why ſhou'd we not *chuſe* to do ſo? For, did we depend upon Nature for it, Nature might give us a *long* Life, but ſhe cou'd not give us a *good* one; and then what would it be of Advantage to us that we have lived? Whereas now the ſame God that gives either a long Life or a ſhort, can make each of them to be an equal Bleſſing.

We depend upon God for the Succeſs of our Undertakings; and why ſhould we not *chuſe* to do ſo? Did we depend for it upon our own Wiſdom and Strength, by the ſame Rule,

Rule, Every one that could over-power us or out-wit us, had it at his Diſcretion to defeat and undo us: Whereas under the Diſpoſals of God we are guarded againſt theſe Iſſues of Common Enmity; and either our Undertakings are ſure to ſucceed; or elſe, what is better, we are ſure to reap Advantage from their Diſappointment; ſo long as our neceſſary Dependance upon God is ſanctify'd by a pious Reſolution to depend upon him willingly, and to reſign our ſelves to his Diſpoſals.

We depend upon God for our power of Acting: And why ſhould we not *chuſe* to do ſo? ſince the ſame God that ſupports us in the power of Acting, is only able to regulate and conduct what we do to our Advantage; without which Iſſue, our power of Acting muſt ſink and degenerate into a bare power of doing our ſelves harm.

But the principal Object of our Dependance is ſtill behind; and that is, *God's Grace, in order to our Sanctification*, and to enable us to diſcharge the Offices of Religion and Vertue.

To look and ſeek to God for this, is the main buſineſs of our Dependance; becauſe

Grace

Grace is the Chief of all God's Benefits: So great a Benefit is the Grace of God, that there is no other Good *in Compariſon of it*; no other Good at all *without it*.

And therefore it is that our Saviour when arguing the Certainty of God's Paternal Love, from the Love that is generally obſervable in all Natural Parents, he thus expreſſes himſelf, *Luke* 11. 13. *If ye then being evil know how to give good gifts unto your Children, how much more will your heavenly Father give* (give what? *give good gifts*; ſo the Antitheſis requires, and ſo one would think the Expreſſion ſhould run: but inſtead of this, it runs *thus How much more will your heavenly Father give*) *the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?* Implying, that the Holy Spirit is equivalent to *all other* good Gifts; nay, as much *exceeding* them, as the Love and Power of God exceeds that of Man.

And therefore however we may eſteem Long Life and Proſperous Fortunes, yet ſo indifferent are they in the Event, That God beſtows them without any Indication either of his Love or Hatred (as that Paſſage of *Solomon* is to be interpreted *Eccleſ.* 9. 1.) For God beſtows them not only upon the Good,

Good, but upon the Evil and the Unthankful; upon thoſe that ſeek them not from him; upon thoſe that do not acknowledge them as received at his hands; and finally, upon thoſe that are never the *better* for *having* received them; as will appear at the adjuſting of Accounts.

But on the other hand, *ſanctifying* Grace is a Pearl of greater Price than to be caſt away upon the Regardleſs. This is a Certain Benefit and a laſting Good; and therefore God diſpoſes it upon another ſort of Condition (*viz.*) *to them that ask him*; i. e. to them that wiſely eſtimate, and worthily value, and earneſtly deſire this excellent Gift.

And indeed when we conſider the Duty of Prayer, qualify'd with thoſe Circumſtances that the Holy Scripture does require, (*viz.*) That it muſt be *Inſtant*, *Fervent*, *Importunate*, *Violent*; we may conclude that Prayer it ſelf is as certain a *Proof* of the Communications of Grace, as it is a *Means* to procure them: For if we muſt pray *Inſtantly*, *Fervently*, *Importunately*, *Violently*, what are the Things we muſt pray for in this manner? No worldly Need can juſtifie ſuch

a Deſire: Our Deſire of Life or any of its Accommodations, in *ſuch a meaſure*, would be Immoderate, Impatient, and Sinful; and therefore it is that Submiſſion and Reſignation is preſcribed to our Requeſts in reſpect of all *theſe things*: *Grace* therefore is the only Bleſſing that can be worthy *ſuch* a meaſure of Importunity: This alone we may deſire inſtantly, and with Impatience of Denial, and yet not exceed: Grace is *that Kingdom of Heaven that ſuffereth Violence, and the Violent take it by force.*

In this Office of Prayer, and in an Endeavour of Chriſtian-living ſuitable and comporting with it, (without which Comportment the Efficacy of our Prayers muſt neceſſarily be voided;) I ſay, in theſe two Offices of praying for God's Grace, and walking in the Road of God's Grace, conſiſts the *Practice* of our Dependance upon him. The Fruits whereof I ſhall next enquire into; and ſhew that through this Dependance upon God (which our preſent Weakneſs and Inſufficiency enforces) Man reaps greater Advantages from his preſent State, than could have been look'd for, had he been reſtored to the State of Primitive Perfection.

And

And to prove This, it will be Argument enough, if I ſhew that Man has *now* Proviſion made, 1. For a ſafer Vertue; and 2. For a more commendable Vertue; and, 3. For a more excellent Reward than otherwiſe he could have had.

1. Man has now Proviſion made for a ſafer Vertue than *Adam* had when he was firſt formed. *Adam* was *left in the hands of his own Counſel*; And ſo the Author of *Eccluſ.* tells us, *Chap.* 15. 24. where he ſays, *God made Man* ἀπ' ἀρχῆς *from or in the beginning, and left him in the hands of his own Counſel*, &c. For if we interpret this Text to mean, that Man has Counſel, Wiſdom, Liberty or Strength, to chuſe and purſue all that is neceſſary to Godlineſs, I am ſure it can be apply'd to *no man ſince the Fall:* and this the whole Current of Sacred Writ makes demonſtrable.

But *Adam* was furniſhed with ſuch degrees of Perfection, that it was *fit* he ſhould be left in the hands of his own Counſel. But withal, we know that *Adam fell under his own hands*; and after he was once fall'n, after he had darken'd his Soul, weaken'd and poiſon'd his Nature, by giving up Reaſon to

the power of Appetite, he muſt neceſſarily have ſunk under the dominion of Sin, he muſt neceſſarily have grown more and more indulging, careleſs, deſperate, and without thoughts or power of Repenting, (as the Caſe of the fall'n Angels was) had it not been for the Grace of that Covenant which was founded purely upon the occaſion of his Fall. For all the ſubſequent Power that *Adam* had to pleaſe God, and to walk as a Man converted from the errour of his way from that time forward, iſſued not at all from the Strength of his Nature, as if Recovered by the means of Reflexion; Nature was as much indiſpoſed and inſufficient to produce ſuch a Reconciling Change *in him*, as it is at this Day in any of his Poſterity.

And accordingly we may obſerve from the Hiſtory, That *before* the New Covenant was pronounc'd and ratified in the Promiſed Seed, there was no footſtep of Repentance that appear'd either in *Adam* or *Eve*; but merely a ſhifting off their Crime, as if in Deſign to preclude their Repentance; and therefore it appears that all the ſubſequent Power that *Adam* had whereby to Repent, and to pleaſe God, did iſſue purely from the Succour of that

that Grace which God vouchſafed him in Compaſſion to his new-contracted Diſorder; and upon which he might now reſt for the Courſe of his future Obedience, with much more Security, than he could upon his *former Native* Perfections. Now to argue home to my Purpoſe.

Let us ſuppoſe that after *Adam* had fall'n, yet (this notwithſtanding) God had ordain'd, that Original Uprightneſs ſhould have equally deſcended upon all his Poſterity; yet we muſt allow that any one of his Poſterity, though born with the ſame degrees of Uprightneſs that he *was*, might yet have been foil'd by the Wiles of the Tempter, and ſo have fall'n as well as he *did:* Now had they ſo fall'n (I mean fall'n only perſonally and for themſelves) had they ſo fall'n, and in the mean while the Covenant of Grace not been founded (as it was only founded upon the Account of the Propagation of Sin) how could any ſuch have ever recover'd to that State from which they fell, or indeed to any Degree of Acceptance with God? Their Caſe muſt have been as deſperate as that of the fall'n Angels was before; they would have follow'd the propenſion of Appetite, which

was

was now made natural to them; and aimed at nothing more than to enjoy the Pleasures of farther Depravation.

Whereas on the other hand, according to the present state of things, and for the succour of our Nature as it is now infirm, there is a Provision made through the New Covenant for a safer Adherence to Vertue; and *such* a Provision as every Christian may have the Benefit of; unless it be in the case of affected Slothfulness, and wilful Indulgence in Sin.

Sin indeed may more easily make its *first Breaches* upon us, by reason of our Present Infirmity; either through Ignorance or Surprize; but it cannot get Dominion over us without our own deliberate Option: For, it is an express Gospel-Promise against the *Power* of *Sin*, that *It shall not have Dominion over us*; against the Power of the *Devil*, that *Greater is he that is in you, than he that he that is in the World*; against the Power of Temptations, that *God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be Tempted above what we are able*; against Discouragement from the Pretext of our Infirmities, that *we may do all things through Christ that strengtheneth us*; and in case of falling, *We have an Advocate with*

with the Father, and a Propitiation for our Sins: by means whereof, the Favour of God may be Regained, and that Principle of Grace Recovered, upon which (as upon a new Stock) we may grow good again, and to an entire Acceptance.

And now ſay, How could the Safety of humane Vertue be better provided for? Or in caſe we want Vertue, of whom can we complain?

But, 2. The preſent ſtate of our Nature, weak and depraved as it is, gives Man the Opportunity of a more commendable Vertue.

From the ſtate of greater Uprightneſs and Order of Mind, and Compoſure of our Affections, we might expect more *elevated Thoughts*, *Conceptions* more worthy of God, *Acts of Adoration* more ſteady and affectionate, and a Diſcharge of Moral Duties leſs obnoxious to Errour and Interruption: But in the mean time the preſent ſtate of our Deficiency has no Reaſon to complain; when it is vouchſafed thus much of Indulgence, that the moſt abrupt Groanings of an humble Soul, preſt with Infirmities, and wreſtling with Temptations, and thence feelingly imploring

ploring the Aſſiſtance of God, is a more acceptable Sacrifice to him, than any Hymns that the moſt exalted Underſtanding can dictate, or any Office that the moſt compoſed Affections can perform.

Now *Thus* it is, and *This* is the Reaſon of it, (*viz.*) Becauſe all the Notion we have of humane Vertue is this ---- That it is a Conflict maintained by Rectify'd Reaſon againſt the lower Appetites: according to which Notion, the Holy Scripture calls the Chriſtian Life *a State of Warfare.* Now as Affections and Luſts do make the Oppoſition, and occaſion the Conflict, ſo it cannot be doubted, but that they give the great Commendation, if not the very Being, to our Vertue. To kill a Paſſion, to ſubdue a riſing Motion of Anger, Hatred, Pride, or Carnality, is the worthieſt Oblation we can offer to God; and the more of theſe we have to ſubdue, the more we have to offer: *When I am weak, then am I ſtrong*, ſays the Apoſtle; and thus we may interpret him ---- The more Infirmities there are in our Nature, the more eminent Opportunities we have to be Conquerours in the Chriſtian Conflict.

Wiſh

Wiſh therefore we may, that Vertue were more *cheap*, or more *eaſie* to us; but we ought to remember, That at the ſame time we wiſh *away* that which gives Vertue her beſt Title both to preſent Commendation and future Reward.

Which is another Advantage of our preſent State, (*viz.*) That it makes way for a more Excellent Reward.

To diſpute whether *Adam*, if he had not ſinned, ſhould at ſome Period of his Earthly Life have been Tranſlated into Heaven, and there united to God in his Eternal Enjoyments, were only to be wiſe above what is written: If we will confine our Judgment to what is written; Nothing appears *there*, but that the *Promiſe of Heaven* was made in *Chriſt alone*, whoſe Undertaking for Mankind commenced purely upon the Occaſion of the Fall.

And if we obſerve the Order of that ſolemn Prayer which our Saviour makes for his Diſciples and the ſucceeding Church, *Joh.* 17. where *ver.* 17. he prays, *Holy Father, ſanctifie them by thy Truth*; and after this, in a diſtinct Requeſt, at *ver.* 24. he ſays, *Father, I will that they whom thou haſt*

given me be with me where I am: We may reaſonably argue from This, That the utmoſt Sanctification humane Nature is capable of, carries in it no Pretenſions to Heaven, but that This is a Title that riſes ſimply from the Compact of our Lord's Mediation.

It is manifeſtly evident from frequent Paſſages of Holy Writ, That (although not ſimply *Bliſs it ſelf*, yet) the *higheſt degrees* of Bliſs are annex'd to the Doctrine of the Croſs; to Afflictions, Sufferings, and Self-Denial; none of which had had any Place or Occaſion, had it not been for the *Depravation* of our Nature: For their End is perfectly Medicinal, and deſign'd to correct that *Depravation*, and to bring us to the Vertues of Patience and Humility; Vertues which we are naturally averſe from, and yet they are neceſſary to reform and ſanctifie our Nature.

Now if Afflictions, Sufferings, and Self-Denial, are the things which are ſaid to *work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory*, and yet all theſe Methods of Diſcipline draw their Uſefulneſs from the very State of our Corruption; it cannot be denied but that this preſent State of

of ours does give occaſion and make way for a more excellent Reward than Man *Undepraved* could ever have hoped for.

What Room is there then for complaining of our Condition? What for Reviling Our firſt Parents? What for Cenſuring the divine Diſpoſal of Things? Our Nature is burden'd with Weakneſs and Diſorder, but it has its Remedy in a Religious Dependance, which is able to turn all to Advantage. And therefore to do right to this Contemplation, we ought to cloſe it with Acknowledgment and Wonder ---- *Oh the depth of the Riches of the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God!*

To whom be Glory, *&c.*

FINIS.

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SERMONS *Preach'd by* E. Young, *and Sold by* Walter Kettilby *at the* Biſhop's Head *in* S. Paul's *Church-Yard.*

A Sermon Preach'd before the Queen at *White-Hall*, on *Eaſter-day* 1693.

A Sermon Preach'd before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, at *Guild-Hall* Chapel, *Febr.* 4. 1682.

A Sermon Preach'd at *Salisbury* on *Sunday* July 30. 1693. Being the Time of the Aſſizes.

A Sermon Preach'd at the Aſſizes held in *Wincheſter*, July 11. 1695.

Two Sermons Preach'd at *Wincheſter* Aſſizes: The firſt on *Feb.* 26. 1694. The laſt on *July* 14. 1686.

Two Sermons Preach'd at *White-Hall.* The firſt on *Sunday* April 15. The ſecond on *Sunday* April 22. 1694.

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